

*The Development Council Election*

## **The Development Council Election of 1981: Its Political and Electoral Implications**

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This paper seeks to examine the Development Council (DC) Elections of 4th June 1981 with two major purposes in mind. In the first place the elections are viewed as the first major test of public opinion that the United National Party (UNP) government of President Jayewardene had to face since its massive electoral victory of 1977. It is true that the elections to 12 Municipal Councils and 39 Urban Councils held in May 1979 were also a test of public opinion but that election was confined to urban areas and a total of 993,700 registered voters (13.6 per cent of the national total) while the DC elections were contested in 17 districts spread all over Sri Lanka and having a total of 4,467,000 registered voters (59 per cent of the national total).

Secondly, the election returns are scrutinised with a view to examining whether the method of proportional representation (PR) introduced has resulted in a fairer and more equitable reflection of the opinion of the electorate in the body elected. It should be recalled, at this stage, that the proponents of PR have argued that apart from providing more equitable representation it would also reduce communal tension and allow a better chance for minority groups to successfully enter Parliament and local government bodies.<sup>1</sup>

The DCs were established by Presidential order in the *Gazette* under the provisions of the *Development Councils Act No. 35 of 1980*. Article 2 of the Act authorises the President to establish a DC for each administrative district. If two or more administrative districts had been combined to form one electoral district for the purpose of Parliamentary elections, the President was given the option of forming one DC for the whole of that electoral district. However he chose not to exercise this option and established 24 DCs for the twenty four administrative districts of the island.

1 C. R. de Silva and S. W. R. de A. Samarasinghe, "Which PR? A Critical Examination of the System of Proportional Representation Adopted in the 1978 Constitution of Sri Lanka." *Preliminary Documents, Seminar on the Parliamentary Process in Sri Lanka*, Colombo Marga Institute, 1980, p. 18.

The Development Councils Act specified that each council shall consist of all members of Parliament elected for the area under its jurisdiction. It was also to contain a number of other representatives separately elected by the people of the area. The number of additional elected members was to be specified by the President of the country with the provision that such number shall be not more than the number of members of Parliament elected from the area. However, areas which elected either one or two members to Parliament were to have four or three additional representatives respectively to make a total of five on the DC.

In the event the President specified the number of representatives to be elected as one less than the number of MPs for each district except in the cases of Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu which had only one MP each and thus had to have 4 elected members each.

The method of electing members for DCs was specified by the *Development Councils Elections Act No. 20 of 1981* which introduced a list system and a modified version of the 'Hamilton Method' of proportional representation.<sup>2</sup> Nominations for elections to all twenty four DCs were called for between the 20th and the 27th of April 1981 and the date for polling fixed as 4th June 1981.

The Development Councils Elections were fought in the context of a number of far reaching changes in economic policy introduced by the UNP government since 1977. In sum, these policies were aimed at providing greater incentives to the private sector by reducing state control of the economy and at pruning welfare expenditure while providing for a massive investment programme to generate new employment. Among other things, import controls, price controls and rationing were reduced. Corporate and personal taxes were also lowered and the exchange rate was unified, devalued and allowed to float. Though education and health remained free services other welfare expenses and subsidies were gradually reduced. On the other hand, enormous sums of money obtained largely by borrowing from abroad were used to finance, among other things, the three 'Lead Projects' namely the Accelerated Mahaveli Development Programme (a programme designed to telescope into six years a project originally designed for thirty years), urban development and the provision of infrastructure facilities for an Investment Promotion Zone.

2. For details see C. R. de Silva, *Proportional Representation in Sri Lanka*. Paper submitted to the *Seminar on Universal Adult Franchise*, Colombo, Sri Lanka Foundation Institute, 1981.

The new policies gave a fresh lease of life to a sagging economy and helped to make some reduction in overall unemployment. However, it also led to an annual inflation rate approaching 40 per cent or more from about 1979. More-over, the increased flow of imports caused mainly by the higher level of domestic activity and partly by the liberalization policy, led to a massive deficit in the balance of payments not to mention the loss of output in some domestic industries which found themselves unable to compete with imports. The Government's financial difficulties have been compounded by a growing budget deficit which it had to finance partly with increased borrowing from the domestic banking system causing further strain on prices and external payments. Indeed, the situation was such that in June 1980 the IMF suspended its Extended Fund Facility to Sri Lanka on the grounds that the Sri Lankan Government had failed to adhere to the conditions, especially with respect to government fiscal management, which were mutually agreed upon when the Facility was negotiated in late 1978. The credit facility was resumed only in June 1981 following protracted renegotiation where the Government undertook to make several large reductions in its spending programme. Although the rate of inflation appears to have slightly moderated since the third quarter of 1980, the official retail price index still showed an annual rate of about 25 per cent in the last quarter of that year. Moreover, the employment generation programme, at least in the state and the formal private sectors appeared to have run out of steam in 1980 when only about 18,000 new jobs were created in the two sectors when compared with about 130,000 in each of the two preceding years. Thus in June 1981 the UNP was facing the electorate with a somewhat mixed record in the economic front in a country where 'rice and curry' issues (i.e., jobs and prices) have been the decisive factor in recent elections.

### **The Election Campaign**

The United National Party had the advantages of incumbency and of having a relatively cohesive party organisation. Incumbency gave the Party not only the advantage of determining the date of the election but also control over the state radio and two of the three major newspaper groups in the country. The UNP was thus able to start their campaign well ahead of the other parties. An important part of the UNP strategy was to keep on the offensive with the President and the Prime Minister simultaneously spearheading political campaigns in different parts of the country. By late March the UNP schedule of political meetings was already organised.<sup>3</sup>

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3. Material for this section has been largely derived from English and Sinhala newspapers which covered the campaign including *The Ceylon Daily News*, *Sun*, *Daily Mirror*, *Dinamina*, *Dawasa*, *Aththa* and *Dinakara*.

The early campaign of the UNP was directed largely against its chief rival, the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP). The UNP speakers stressed that the SLFP, while in power, had postponed local government and parliamentary elections and had adopted vindictive and authoritarian measures. The leaders of the UNP sought to gain support as protectors of democratic values. On the economic front the UNP tried to meet the major criticism of the opposition—the high rate of inflation—head on. It was admitted that prices were rising but this was blamed partly on the rise of prices of imports like oil and it was strongly argued that incomes too had risen. Emphasis was laid on the fact that development projects did lead to inflation and that the government had achieved a major break-through in reducing unemployment and in eliminating queues, shortages and rationing. The speakers for the UNP challenged the opposition to state how they would reduce prices. The DCs were put forward as instruments which could be used for district development. Development projects, construction of new buildings and provision of facilities were inaugurated or promised in many areas. The government also took certain positive steps to improve its electoral chances. A subsidy of one-third the cost of planting certain types of fruit trees was approved in March. About the same time the import of chillies and onions which had depressed local prices was stopped. The decision to impose prohibitive duties on 126 imported items including poultry, meat, confectionary, cordials, jams, biscuits, soap and the like was perhaps partly aimed at gaining support from local businessmen and industrial workers. The UNP also made a special effort to win over the Estate Tamil voters who were promised ‘humane treatment’.

The principal feature of the SLFP’s counter-attack was to stress the UNP’s poor performance on prices. The SLFP also promised to restore some of the subsidies and welfare programmes pruned by the UNP government. Party spokesmen for the SLFP attacked the UNP government as one which was corrupt and ready to victimise those who were in the opposition. One instance of victimisation cited was the dismissal of employees in the state sector who struck work in July 1980. A more frequent charge was that the deprivation of civic rights of Mrs Bandaranaike was an act of political victimisation. The SLFP leader, Mrs Bandaranaike, however, was placed at a disadvantage due to the civic disabilities imposed on her. It led to jockeying for position in relation to the succession to the SLFP leadership. This eventually came to a head on the question whether to contest the DC elections at all. The SLFP had opposed the *Development Councils Act* in Parliament largely on the ground that it was not a genuine step towards decentralization of power. It was pointed out that UNP MPs would form a built-in majority in most districts outside the Northern and Eastern Provinces (NEP) even if the SLFP won the

DC elections Mrs Bandaranaike, backed by several party stalwarts including Hector Kobbekaduwa, T. B. Ilangaratne and Felix Bandaranaike held that it would be better to boycott the elections altogether. The party coffers were by no means full and the projected anti-UNP front did not seem to be materialising. Indeed, SLFP co-operation with the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF) was used by the UNP to label the SLFP as a party supporting Tamil separatists (*Eelam*). The negotiations to enter into an agreement at least with the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP) and the Mahajana Eksath Peramuna (MEP) did not progress due to the insistence of the two smaller parties that some electoral districts should be conceded to them. Nevertheless, a strong SLFP grass-roots movement grew in favour of contesting the elections and this course of action was supported by Maithripala Senanayake, Stanley Thilakaratne and a number of others. It was reported that a majority of district branches of the SLFP supported the proposal to contest the elections and eventually after much discussion the SLFP Executive Committee decided on 10th April 1978, by 48 to 47 votes to contest.

It became increasingly clear that there was very little time left for the SLFP to organize a successful campaign. Apart from the difficulty of building a coalition with the Left, even support within the party became suspect in some areas due to quarrels relating to the priority to be awarded to prospective candidates on the lists. It was at this stage (23rd April) that allegations of abuse of power were brought before the Special Presidential Commission against Hector Kobbekaduwa, former Minister of Agriculture and Lands and D. M. Jayaratne, former MP for Gampola. The SLFP was thus faced with the prospect of the full glare of adverse publicity against two of its key figures in the period just before the DC elections. This was the immediate cause which impelled the SLFP party leadership on 24th April 1981 to reverse its decision to contest the elections.

The decision of the SLFP to withdraw changed the entire complexion of the election campaign. The LSSP and the MEP also decided to abandon the contest. The Communist Party (Moscow) (CP) (M) which had from the beginning decided not to contest the elections did not vary its decision. This left the UNP to face only the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) and a few independent groups in the areas outside the NEP. The JVP campaign was equally critical of the UNP and the traditional anti-UNP elements. The UNP was attacked as a capitalist party representing the interests of a small group of wealthy persons. The SLFP was attacked as a feudal, out-moded party and the LSSP and CP(M) were reviled as parties which had betrayed the workers. The JVP made a strong effort to capture the anti-government vote in the eight districts it contested.

It is noteworthy that the UNP spent very little effort in countering JVP propaganda. This might have been because the UNP presumed that the JVP would not gain the support of regular UNP voters. Indeed, the UNP might well have surmised that some JVP success in an election with a high poll would clearly embarrass the SLFP.

In the NEP the contest was basically between the TULF and the UNP, for the Tamil Congress (TC) made very little impact even in the areas that it contested. The TULF had become increasingly critical of the UNP in 1980 and had established some links with the SLFP. The TULF leadership however regarded the DCs as a step in the correct direction. They anticipated that the DCs in the NEP would provide them with a formal organisation which they could control; an organisation of a higher status than existing local government bodies. Therefore, they rejected the more radical view that they should boycott the elections and campaigned for a mandate to continue to struggle for a separate Tamil State. The UNP leadership which was irritated by TULF-SLFP links decided to contest all districts and to seek a base in the Tamil majority areas as well. Since the SLFP was not contesting the elections the UNP appealed to all Sinhalese and Muslims in the NEP to vote with the government against separatism. The UNP also hoped to win votes among the Tamils by virtue of the status granted to the Tamil language and by virtue of other provisions favouring minorities in the constitution of 1978. However, in the NEP the UNP was faced by a party as well organised as itself. The UNP made an intense effort to build support in the Jaffna district. In early April each of the old electoral constituencies in Jaffna was assigned to a senior UNP politician. In the closing stages of the campaign, however, a series of incidents probably undermined what progress that the UNP campaign had achieved in Jaffna. There was rise in political violence. The leader of the UNP list in Jaffna was shot dead. Soon after that some police officers attending a TULF meeting were shot at and two of them died. These incidents were followed by extensive violence which allegedly involved not only civilians from rival political factions and ethnic groups but also some personnel from the security forces, especially the police. This 'second round' of violence resulted in some more deaths and caused extensive damage to property, most notably to the Public Library of Jaffna which was completely destroyed.

Finally, two features of the election campaign are worth noting. Firstly in the areas outside the NEP the non-participation of the Opposition made the election campaign a relatively subdued affair. Secondly, violence during the campaign was, by and large, limited to Jaffna.

### The 'Low' Turnout

A comprehensive tabulation of the DC election results is provided in Table 1A of the statistical appendix. Perhaps the most striking feature of the DC poll was its relatively low turnout. Table 2A shows that when all the districts which polled in June are taken together the turnout amounted to 55.0 per cent. Compared to an average turnout of 87.1 per cent at the last (1977) General Election this is a very low turnout indeed. However, Table 2A also shows that in terms of the turnout the districts which polled in June can be easily divided into two groups; those districts outside the NEP belong to the first group and those in the NEP belong to the second. In the former which we shall call the 'South' the majority of the voters are Sinhalese and in the latter the majority are Tamils.

The turnout in the South and in the NEP in June were 50.2 per cent and 72.9 per cent respectively when compared with 89.7 per cent and 86.4 per cent respectively in 1977. In explaining the relatively low turnout in both areas in June 1981 two general points must be made at the outset. Firstly, elections to local government bodies in Sri Lanka have almost always attracted lower turnouts than elections to Parliament.<sup>4</sup> For example, the average turnout in the local government elections held in 1953 was about 54 per cent whereas the turnout at the parliamentary elections held one year earlier was 71 per cent.<sup>5</sup> Of course, in more recent years this gap has narrowed with the turnout in local government elections catching up on that of parliamentary elections. Thus the local bodies that polled in 1960/61 recorded an average turnout of 72 per cent as against turnouts of 78 per cent and 76 per cent respectively at the March 1960 and July 1960 parliamentary elections. However, the gap still persists. For example, the elections for Municipal and Urban Councils in May 1979 recorded an average turnout of 68.6 per cent and 73.5 per cent respectively as against 87.1 per cent at the 1977 parliamentary elections.

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4. The prediction that the larger the units of local government become the steeper the decline in popular participation was made by Robert A. Dahl, "The City in the Future of Democracy" *American Political Science Review* LXI (4) Dec. 1967, p. 960. It was supported by an analysis of electoral statistics from the United States, United Kingdom, India, Germany, Mexico and Italy by Norman H. Nie, G. Bingham Powell and Kenneth Prewitt "Social Structure and Political Participation: Development Relationships" *American Political Science Review* LXIII (2) June 1969 pp. 366-368 which reveals negative correlations between urban residence and local participation.

5. Commissioner of Elections, *Administrative Report* (Annual).

Of course, it is possible to argue that since the DCs apparently enjoy a higher status than the local authorities of the past (and also because the Government tried to make the DC vote a matter of confidence in it) these elections should have aroused greater interest. That may well be so. However, there is some evidence to suggest that in elections to local authorities in Sri Lanka there is a tendency for the turnout to be inversely related to the size of the local body. Thus, broadly speaking, Town Councils and Village Committees have generally recorded higher turnouts than Municipal and Urban Councils with the last mentioned almost invariably having the lowest turnout among the four.<sup>6</sup> This may be due to the fact that while there is relative voter apathy in local authority elections it is tempered by the fact that in the smaller authorities such as the Village Committees there often is some degree of personal involvement of the voter with the candidates and the campaign which puts pressure on the voter to cast his vote. In this respect neither the large geographical areas covered by the respective DCs nor the law which prohibits candidates and members of their respective families from conducting personal door-to-door canvassing would have helped in increasing the poll.<sup>7</sup>

The second point is that it is almost certain that there is relatively little public awareness concerning the nature, scope and role of the DCs. Thus it is likely that some voters might not have bothered to vote to elect members for an institution which they little understood. Moreover, it is possible that some voters, perhaps persuaded by the line adopted by some of the opposition parties, could have entertained doubts about the usefulness of DCs as a genuine instrument of decentralised administration, especially when the President of the country can exercise control over the DCs through his District Ministers.<sup>8</sup> This would have been particularly true of those who felt that even if the DCs were potentially useful it would be pointless voting for them as presently constituted because the government would enjoy an in-built majority on the DCs in the South through the ex-officio membership of MPs on them.

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6. For example, as cited earlier the average turnout in the Municipal elections of May 1979 was 68.6 per cent as against a figure of 73.5 per cent in that year's Urban Council elections (See also Commissioner of Elections, *Annual Reports*).

7. *Development Council Elections Act, No. 20 of 1981*, article 75.

8. The most important of such powers are embodied in Part XII of the *Development Councils Act No. 35 of 1980* which gives the President the right to remove members of the Executive Committees of the DCs and the District Minister the right to dissolve the Councils. (Of course one could point out that the Minister of local Government enjoyed similar powers over the old local authorities).

**The Northern and Eastern Provinces**

When an allowance is made for the factors discussed above the turnout in the NEP appears to be more or less normal. However, even in the NEP there were significant inter-district variations in the turnout (see Table 1) with Jaffna District recording 69.1 per cent which was the lowest in the NEP and also was a drop of over 12 percentage points on the 1977 turnout. The turnouts in Amparai and Trincomalee were also significantly lower than those in 1977.

**Table 1**  
**1977 Parliamentary Elections and 1981 DC Elections Turnout**  
**in the Northern and Eastern Provinces**

	(i) 1977	(ii) 1981	(iii) Difference (i - ii)
<b>Northern Province</b>			
Jaffna .. .. .	81.5	69.1	12.4
Mannar .. .. .	92.7	85.0	7.7
Vavuniya .. .. .	82.6	78.4	4.2
Mullaitivu .. .. .	79.7	72.6	7.1
<b>Eastern Province</b>			
Batticaloa .. .. .	87.8	80.4	7.4
Amparai .. .. .	88.9	71.7	17.2
Trincomalee .. .. .	85.6	74.0	11.0

Source : Table 2A.

Jaffna of course has always been a district with a relatively low turnout at general elections. In every parliamentary election its turnout has been significantly below the national average and often the lowest in the NEP.<sup>9</sup> However, the main factor that would have kept some potential voters away from the polling booth on 4th June would have been the pre-election violence which severely disrupted normal life in many parts of the district. Moreover, it was also reported that a number of polling booths were not kept open for the full duration required by law which could have been a contributing factor that helped to cause a low poll.

9. It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this. The generally conservative nature of Jaffna society which stands against politicisation of society to the extent that it has happened in the South could be one reason. It is also possible that many voters (e.g. government servants, traders etc.) who are registered in Jaffna are resident elsewhere and therefore fail to exercise their vote, the postal vote notwithstanding.

Jaffna apart, Amparai and Trincomalee are the other two districts in the NEP that have recorded comparatively low turnouts. The reasons for this are not difficult to find. According to the 1981 Census<sup>10</sup> a little over one-third of the population of these two districts are Sinhalese and in the 1977 General Election approximately one-fourth of those who voted in these two districts supported the SLFP. Thus the DC elections boycott campaign of the opposition would have had a greater impact on Amparai and Trincomalee than elsewhere in the NEP.<sup>11</sup>

Where the DC elections in the NEP are concerned the other important point which merits discussion is the performance of the various parties which contested them. None of the independent lists fared well in the two provinces. Neither did the TC whose poor showing is further confirmation of the fact that it has failed to recover the electoral stature that it enjoyed in the North prior to the seventies. In effect, the DC elections in the NEP were more or less a straight contest between the TULF and UNP. In this respect for two main reasons it is useful to consider the Jaffna District separately from the rest.

Firstly, with just over 95 per cent of the population of Jaffna belonging to the Ceylon Tamil community it is ethnically a more or less homogenous district. Although the Ceylon Tamils form the largest ethnic group in the other districts of the NEP save Amparai their proportion in the total population in the NEP is considerably less than in Jaffna. Secondly, as mentioned earlier, the pre-DC election violence in Jaffna would have had more repercussions on the poll there than elsewhere.

In Jaffna, as a percentage of the total registered vote the TULF polled 56.8 per cent in 1981 compared to 58.6 per cent in 1977. This suggests that the party managed to attract in 1981 almost every voter who supported it in 1977. Given the lower turnout in the DC election, this means that the TULF has raised its share of the poll from 72.1 per cent to 82.2 per cent. Its chief rival, the UNP managed to secure only 5 per cent of the total registered vote and 7.3 per cent of the poll. We have referred earlier to the intense political campaign that the UNP conducted, beginning well before the election

10. Department of Census and Statistics, Ministry of Plan Implementation, *Census of Population and Housing—1981: Preliminary Release No. 1*, Colombo, 1981.

11. In fact in the two districts the SLFP supported the TULF and urged its supporters to vote for the latter and, as will be pointed out later in this paper, some appeared to have followed that advice.

campaign proper to develop a political base in the North. The results of the DC elections suggest that it has not paid the immediate electoral dividends that were hoped for. However, this point needs qualification.

The attempt of the UNP to establish an electoral base in Jaffna and its policy of trying to accommodate the demands of the Ceylon Tamil community through measures such as the recognition of the Tamil language in the 1978 Constitution and more recently by the establishment of DCs raise the vexed problem of the stand that the TULF must take *vis a vis* the Government. Broadly speaking it seems historically true that when a major Jaffna party reaches an accord with Colombo its electoral support in Jaffna is weakened. This was true of the TC in the fifties when it suffered a major electoral setback in 1956 partly on account of its close association with the UNP. Being a constituent partner of the 1965 Dudley Senanayake Government does not seem to have helped the Federal Party (FP) either. In the 1970 General election it managed to secure only 45.0 per cent of the total poll in Jaffna, when compared with 65.7 per cent in July 1960 and 50.9 per cent in 1965. In contrast following a period of constant conflict with Colombo on issues such as employment, University admissions and the 1972 Constitution, the TULF did exceedingly well in the 1977 general election. Thus, on the one hand, the TULF probably felt that it had to be cautious in its response to the policy of accommodation that Colombo has to offer. On the other hand, probably the UNP felt that in the absence of a more encouraging and conciliatory response from the TULF it was best to appeal directly to the more moderate elements among the Jaffna voters for their support. On course, in this respect, the UNP was in a sense attempting a return to a district where it had significant electoral support before 1956.<sup>12</sup>

However, even in 1977 the non-TULF vote was a significant 23 per cent of the registered vote and this does not include that of the TC which was with the TULF in that election. Of course, it cannot be assumed that every non-TULF vote was an anti-*Eelam* vote as well. Many of these votes might have been for candidates who took a position even more radical than that of the TULF. Nevertheless there seems to exist some potential to harness and nurture an

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12. For example, in the 1947 General Election the UNP contested four seats, won none but obtained 12.9 per cent of poll of the district. In 1952 it had an electoral alliance with the TC and contested just one seat, the Jaffna town seat and won, obtaining 9.4 per cent of the total poll of the district. In 1956 following its language policy fiasco (See Howard Wriggins, *Ceylon-Dilemmas of a new Nation*, Princeton, New Jersey 1960) it simply abandoned Jaffna and did not return until 1977.

anti-TULF vote in the Jaffna District. After all, in terms of the 1979 electoral register Jaffna is entitled to 11 seats in the next Parliament. This means that under the new proportional representation system, given the 1977 turnout of 82 per cent, any party or list which can obtain the support of about 10.5 per cent of the registered vote (i.e. 12.5 per cent of the poll) is guaranteed a seat. In this context it is worth bearing in mind that if the UNP and the TC, who have been allies before, had fielded a common list in June and succeeded in polling together what they actually obtained independently their list would have secured one seat in Jaffna. Moreover, it is not necessary to stress the importance of the Jaffna vote (6.3 per cent of the all-island total in 1979) for the parties from the South which hope to contest future presidential elections. Clearly, the attempts of the main Southern parties to woo the Jaffna voter must be viewed in this light.

When the DC election results in Jaffna are reviewed in the context of the above comments two further points can be made. Firstly, even in June a little over 10 per cent of the registered voters supported anti-TULF candidates and, secondly, the TULF did not improve upon its 1977 performance in terms of the percentage of the registered voters that it polled. Of course, there is no evidence to infer that the 12 per cent of the voters who voted in 1977 but kept away in 1981 are mainly non-TULF voters or that they would necessarily support a less radical position than that adopted by the TULF at present. Moreover, in the light of the events in Jaffna in early June it is doubtful whether the UNP or any other party from the South would be able to make, on its own, a significant electoral impact in the district in the near future.

In Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu - which together will form the electoral district of Vanni in future parliamentary elections - the electoral performance of the TULF remained practically unchanged from 1977 to 1981. Neither is there any significant change in the performance of the UNP except for the fact that in Mullaitivu where it did not field a candidate in 1977, the party secured 36.6 per cent of the poll in June.

The interpretation of the DC election results in the Eastern Province (EP) has been complicated by the non-participation of the SLFP and by its support for the TULF. In all three districts - Batticaloa, Amparai and Trincomalee - the UNP has more or less retained the support it got in 1977. Indeed, in Amparai and Trincomalee compared to 1977 it has increased the total vote polled. This in itself is of some significance since as we shall see below this was generally not the case in the South. The TULF appears to have lost some support in Amparai where it polled 25.6 per cent of the registered vote in 1977

but only 20.5 per cent in 1981 which percentage approximates the Ceylon Tamil population in the district. However, it is the TULF polls in Batticaloa and Trincomalee that are more interesting.

According to the 1981 census 70.8 per cent of the population of Batticaloa are Ceylon Tamils and 24.0 per cent are Moors. In Trincomalee the Ceylon Tamils account for 38.8 per cent, the Sinhalese for 33.6 per cent, and the Moors for 29.0 per cent. In 1977 the TULF poll as a percentage of the registered vote in the two districts was 40 per cent and 23 per cent respectively and in 1981, 47 per cent and 37 per cent respectively. Given the fact that in 1981 the turnout itself was lower in both districts perhaps the most plausible inference that could be made is that some votes which went to a party other than the UNP in 1977 were switched to the TULF in 1981. In 1971 the SLFP poll as a percentage of the registered vote was 24 per cent in Batticaloa and 21 per cent in Trincomalee. Evidently some fraction of that vote has benefitted the TULF in 1981 although many of the SLFP voters seem to have stayed away from the poll. However, as the figures reveal it is in the South that the boycott campaign appears to have had the greatest impact with, on average, only one out of every two voters bothering to vote and it is the significance of this fact which has attracted most attention from political commentators.

### **The South**

Ten out of the seventeen districts in the South polled on 4th June. In every one of them the turnout was down on that of 1977 by a margin exceeding 22 percentage points. Indeed, with the exception of Badulla, Anuradhapura and Puttalam, the drop in the turnout exceeded 30 percentage points. Voter non-participation was especially marked in Galle, Gampaha and Polonnaruwa where nearly half of those who voted in 1977 failed to do so in June 1981. Gampaha and Polonnaruwa have been traditional strongholds of the SLFP. In both districts in 1977 the SLFP's performance in terms of the percentage of the total vote it polled was better than its national average in the South. In Galle too, traditionally the SLFP and the left have done comparatively well in the past. Thus it is not surprising that the appeal for a boycott struck a more sympathetic chord in those districts.

In all districts polled in June the UNP secured 30.7 per cent of the registered vote when compared with 42.9 per cent in 1977. However, this includes the NEP. It is essentially in the South that the UNP and its allies and the SLFP (and its allies?) will fight it out in the next parliamentary elections. Thus we must look for indications that the DC election results give concerning current thinking of the voters in the South.

In the ten Southern districts the UNP's poll as a percentage of the total registered vote was 33.1 per cent in 1981 when compared with 48.6 per cent in 1977. Clearly the UNP has 'lost', at least temporarily, about 15 voters in every 100 on the register. On the other hand the non-UNP vote (including the rejected vote) amounted to 17 per cent of the total registered vote.<sup>13</sup> It is arguable that the 33.1 per cent polled by the UNP is inflated by the tendency on the part of some voters to support the governing party in mid-term elections because of the favours that they could gain by extending such support or because they are persuaded to do so by the governing party which can and normally does use state power to boost its electoral chances. It is also equally possible that some UNP voters did not bother to vote because in the absence of the SLFP and the old left there was no serious contest. Moreover, it could be pointed out that in the 1970 General Election when the UNP fared very poorly the party still managed to secure the votes of 34.9 per cent of those who were on the register in the ten districts in question.<sup>14</sup> Thus it may be conjectured that in any election in the near future the UNP could be fairly confident of securing the support of about one-third of those who are registered to vote in the South. By the same token the DC elections also show that the Opposition could be equally confident in gaining the support of about one-fifth of the electorate without further persuasion. These two categories then account for about 50 per cent of the electorate. Given the fact that in the last two general elections a little less than 15 per cent of the voters failed to vote, the next parliamentary election campaign will essentially be one of persuading the remaining 35 per cent to vote for one or the other of the parties. Of course, in post-DC election statements almost every opposition party claimed either implicitly or explicitly that this 35 per cent were anti-government.<sup>15</sup> But this is a claim that can neither be proved nor disproved. However, by examining in greater detail the voting pattern in the ten districts where polling took place it is possible to shed some light on the current attitude of the voter towards the government and (implicitly) the opposition.

13. The rejected vote which was below one per cent in the last two General Elections reached an unusually high 6.1 per cent of the total poll in 1981. The implication is that a large number of voters deliberately spoilt their ballot papers. It is possible that the bulk of such voters were sympathisers of the opposition parties which boycotted the election and were expressing their anti-government feelings through this action.
14. In 1956 this figure was only 19 per cent (including that of Monaragala which at that time formed a part of the Badulla district). However, it is generally acknowledged that because the UNP fared relatively badly on the first day of polling in 1956 it lost votes on the second and third days.
15. cf. *Dinakara* of 13 June 1981—'SLFP Statement', *Sun* of 11 June 1981—the LSSP point of view; *Aitha* of 15 June 1981—the CP (M) point of view. See also the *Tribune* 1 August 1981 to 29 August 1981 for reprints of news from party political journals regarding party reactions to the election.

Broadly speaking, the UNP vote in the ten districts concerned fall into two clearly distinguishable clusters. The first consists of Colombo, Gampaha, Kalutara, Galle, Hambantota and Puttalam where the UNP secured about 30 per cent of the registered vote. In Matale, Anuradhapura and Badulla it fared considerably better securing between 40.4 per cent (Matale) and 48.2 per cent (Badulla) of the registered vote. Polonnaruwa where it polled 34 per cent does not neatly fall into either cluster. It is not easy to offer an explanation for this discrepancy in voter behaviour. However, we would like to make a few speculative observations.

Firstly, most of the districts in the first cluster are either relatively urbanized districts (e.g. Colomb, Gampaha, Kalutara and Galle)<sup>16</sup> or those where the SLFP and the left have generally done well in elections (e.g. Gampaha, Kalutara, Galle, and Hambantota). It is generally acknowledged that as a group the urban and semi-urban fixed wage earners (e.g. clerks, teachers, etc. who belong to the lower-middle class and peons and other unskilled or semi-skilled workers in the state sector) have gained relatively little from the economic policies of the present government and indeed probably have suffered losses in real earnings especially since about the second quarter of 1979 due to rapid inflation and cuts in the social wage.<sup>17</sup> Thus as the SLFP and the old left claim, some fraction of those who abstained from voting in June are almost certainly potential anti-government voters at the next parliamentary elections. The problem is to attribute a numerical value to that fraction. Following the logic adopted earlier in speculating on the 'minimum' of electoral support the UNP can hope for, one could argue that the support gained by the SLFP and the old left in 1977 is also such a minimum. If so the SLFP on its own gained the support of 28.1 per cent of the registered vote in the six districts concerned and if the left vote is also added this increases to 35.7 per cent. If this argument is valid the implication is that the more or less committed pro-UNP and anti-UNP votes are finely balanced around 35 per cent each in

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16. In the 1981 Census the percentage of urban population in these districts were as follows : Colombo 74.3%, Gampaha 27.8%, Kalurara 21.4%, Galle 20.6% (the average for Sri Lanka was 21.5%).

17. The social wage is defined to include food subsidies, subsidised public transport, free school books and other current transfers from the government budget which increase private disposable incomes.

respect of these six districts in the South and perhaps of the South in general. However, the argument becomes more complicated due to the several factors considered below.

Firstly, one has to explain the relatively good performance of the UNP in Matale, Badulla and Anuradhapura. In Badulla there is a significant population of Estate Tamils.<sup>18</sup> When compared with the 1976 electoral register (on which the 1977 election was conducted) the 1979 register shows an increase of about 18 per cent in the number of registered voters in these districts. This is significantly higher than the national average increase of 13.6 per cent. Thus the inference is that hitherto disfranchised Estate Tamils are entering the electoral register in significant numbers.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, after 1947 it is only in the last few years that representatives of the Estate Tamil community have begun to stake serious claims to seats in Parliament and on other elective bodies. Thus the voters of this community will perhaps be more motivated than before to exercise their vote. In the context of the above developments it is probable that the UNP's ally, the political wing of the Ceylon Workers Congress (CWC),<sup>20</sup>—whose nominees were on the UNP list in both districts—played an important role in the latter's performance in June. Indeed, Badulla was the only district in the South where the UNP secured more votes in 1981 (123,166) than in 1977 (114,042).

The above-average performance of the UNP in Anuradhapura—the party secured the support of 45.3 per cent of the registered vote in 1981 compared with 47.0 per cent in 1977—may probably be due to the favourable impact of the Accelerated Mahaveli Programme on jobs and incomes in the district. The same factor probably influenced voter behaviour in Matale. It is also useful to note that in the adjacent district of Polonnaruwa where the direct impact of the Mahaveli is said to be marginal the UNP failed to do as well.

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18. In the 1981 Census the percentage was 21.1%.

19. Of course this can only be a tentative conclusion. We do not have an ethnic breakdown of the voting population. Neither is an ethnic breakdown of migration available. Therefore we cannot rule out the possibility that the in-migration of citizens into the district concerned has boosted the electoral register. However, this is unlikely. In the intercensal period 1963–71 Badulla had a net out-migration of about 30,000. If the same pattern were to hold for the late seventies it is likely that at least some fraction of the above average increase in the voting population of the district can be assigned to the enfranchisement of Estate Tamils. Department of Census and Statistics, 1971 *Census General Report*, Colombo, 1978.

20. The CWC is a trade union whose membership consists almost entirely of Estate Tamil workers.

Secondly, there is the so called JVP factor to contend with. The JVP contested eight of the ten districts in the South where polling took place. In terms of the votes that the party polled as a percentage of the registered vote it did relatively well in Hambantota (12.7 per cent), Anuradhapura (13.7 per cent) and Badulla (11.9 per cent). The JVP did moderately well in Colombo, Gampaha and Galle where in each it polled between 9 and 10 per cent of the registered vote and badly in Kalutara and Matale where the percentage was less than 5 in each. What is problematic is to judge the extent to which the JVP vote of 1981 will remain intact in a contest in which the SLFP and the old left also participate. There is a hint in the JVP's performance that it might lose some fraction of the vote it won in June to the SLFP etc. in a future election. For instance in Kalutara the JVP obtained only a little over a third of the vote that an independent left group supported by some prominent local LSSP politicians secured. In Matale also there were two other groups with SLFP connections in the fray and the JVP fared badly. The point made is that it appears that the JVP has not fared well in districts where voters had a clear alternative focus to cast their anti-government vote. However, there are two caveats to this argument.

Firstly, having secured membership in six DCs the JVP has found for the first time in its history an official base from which to work for the improvement of its electoral prospects. Given the important role that political patronage tends to play in Sri Lanka's electoral politics this is no mean advantage. Moreover the UNP may not be unwilling to give the JVP some covert assistance on forums such as the DCs because the former seems to view the JVP, probably quite rightly, as a party which attracts more of the potential SLFP and other old left votes than any of its own.

Secondly and more importantly, although JVP might not retain the 9 per cent of the registered vote it polled in June, it is almost certain to retain some significant fraction of it in a future election. For example, in the Colombo Municipal Council elections of May 1979 where all the major parties contested the JVP polled 4.9 per cent of the registered vote. In a future general election the JVP contesting independently and attracting that level of support would be sufficient to seriously jeopardise the chances of an SLFP or SLFP-led coalition victory especially under the new proportional representation system where the party which wins the highest number of votes in any given district is entitled to a 'bonus' seat as well.

### Some Implications of Proportional Representation

Finally the DC elections have offered us the first opportunity to assess some of the electoral implications of the new system of proportional representation when voting takes place on a district basis. One advantage claimed for any PR system against the first-past-the-post system is that the former reduces wasted votes and makes the one man, one vote, one value principle more of a reality and also gives the smaller parties a chance to get their candidates elected. In the DC elections in the South parties and independent groups which failed to secure even one seat on a DC in any given district together polled about 100,000 votes or 5.5 per cent of the total valid vote. In the NEP such lists polled a total of 11,000 or 9.6 per cent of the total valid poll. Thus in June 1981 the percentage of 'wasted' votes was insignificant in comparison to that in the 'first-past-the-post' system.

The critics of the PR system as constituted in Sri Lanka have argued that the 12.5 per cent cut-off point will prevent the smaller parties from securing representation. In the event the DC elections of 1981 demonstrated that the cut-off point was less effective in preventing smaller parties from securing representation than some critics believed.<sup>21</sup> In fact no party or group was deprived of representation solely because it did not secure one-eighth of the total poll. On the other hand, some groups failed to secure a seat despite polling considerably more than the one-eighth mark simply due to the small number of seats available for distribution.

The next issue concerns minority representation under PR. Table 3 A provides a comprehensive statistical analysis of minority representation in the 1977 Parliament and on the new DCs. In the nation as a whole minority community candidates captured 19 per cent of the seats in 1977 and 32 per cent in 1981. This increase is explained partly by the rise in the percentage of seats allocated to the NEP from 15.5 per cent in the 1977 Parliament to 20.0 per cent on the DCs. This increase benefited almost exclusively the Ceylon Tamils because the DCs have given 22 seats to the Northern Province when compared with 14 seats in the present Parliament whereas in the EP the total number of DC seats (9) is one-fourth less than the number of current parliamentary seats (12). However, this still leaves a rise of 6 percentage points in minority representation to be explained. This is accounted for mainly by the improved representation of Estate Tamils in the plantation districts and of Moors outside the NEP. The former which secured 0.6 per cent of the

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21. N. M. Perera, *Critical Analysis of the New Constitution of the Sri Lanka Government promulgated on 31.08.1978*. Colombo, 1979, pp. 79-90.

seats islandwide in 1977 obtained 3.2 per cent in 1981. The latter who secured 4.2 per cent of the seats in the South in 1977 secured 8.8 per cent in the South in 1981. However, these overall increases mask several other complications.

The Moors have lost heavily in the EP where their representation has been almost halved from 41.7 per cent in the present Parliament to 22.2 per cent on the DCs. Of course this reduction has occurred in the context of a reduced number of seats which under normal circumstances will tend to penalise the minority, whichever that may be. Moreover, if the next parliamentary elections were to be held under the 1979 electoral register EP will get 14 seats which is two more than the number in the present Parliament and the two additional seats will be in Amparai and Trincomalee where the relative size of the Moor population is larger and that of the Ceylon Tamil community smaller than in Batticaloa. Nevertheless, looking at the DC election results purely from a communal angle one could argue that in the EP where the Moors constitute 33.3 per cent of the population they are under-represented on the DCs. The problem arose in Batticaloa where they failed to secure any of the three seats and in Amparai where in 1977 they won three out of five seats but secured only one out of four in 1981.

The case of Batticaloa illustrates the difficulties that minorities are bound to encounter under the present PR system when the number of seats to be won is limited to about five or less. It may be noted that in Batticaloa the Ceylon Tamils constitute 70.8 per cent of the population and Moors 24.0 per cent (i.e. only about one-third of the former). Thus if two political parties were to compete for the three seats, then on the assumption that people vote mainly along communal lines, it will clearly be advantageous to aim for the 69 per cent Ceylon Tamil vote rather than the 23.7 per cent Moor vote especially where there was a further danger of the latter being split by a third list. This is precisely what happened in Batticaloa in the DC elections. The TULF nominated an all-Tamil list, polled 47 per cent of the registered vote-probably mostly Ceylon Tamil votes-and won two seats. An all-Moor independent list polled 11 per cent of the registered vote-probably mostly Moor votes-but did not win a seat. The UNP won the third seat polling 22 per cent of the registered vote.

In Amparai the Moors account for 41.5 per cent of the population. The TULF nominated an all-Tamil list, polled 21 per cent of the registered vote and won a seat. Evidently by omitting Moors from its list the TULF appears to have decided to restrict its appeal more or less to the Ceylon Tamils (20.1 per cent of the population) in the district and the poll indicates that it probably was the case. The UNP list which won three seats had a Moor, a Sinhalese and a Ceylon Tamil as one, two and three. Clearly, the UNP meant

to appeal to all three communities. Of course in a parliamentary election with a larger number of seats to be won the electoral prospects of the Moor community in the EP should improve. However, even then two qualifications must be made.

Firstly, because provision exists to give a bonus seat to the party with the highest poll, the increase in the number of seats in parliamentary elections need not necessarily benefit the minorities, in this case the Moors in the EP. Secondly, one must consider what might have happened to minority representation had the SLFP and the old left contested.

As noted earlier in the South the Moors and the Estate Tamils have done comparatively well in 1981. However, it could be argued that their chances were considerably improved because the UNP was returned uncontested in seven districts and because even in the remaining ten in the South it did not face a serious contest and therefore obtained an abnormally high 65.9 per cent of the poll. The point made is as follows. In any given district on any given party list the names of the minority community candidates will normally be placed taking into account, among other things, the relative size of the minority community vote in the district. With a few exceptions (e.g. Estate Tamils in the Kandyan districts)<sup>22</sup> any given minority community accounts for less than 15 per cent of the population (voters) in the Southern districts. Thus they are generally bound to be placed relatively low on the list of candidates. This indeed was the case with the UNP lists for the DC elections. Thus in Table 2 the election of those candidates marked with one asterisk would have been in some doubt had the opposition contested in June, and those marked with two asterisks would almost certainly have not been elected. Of course it is conceivable that these losses would have been counterbalanced or even more than counterbalanced by gains due to minority community candidates winning on rival party lists. Indeed, the nomination of minority community candidates could become analogous to a game of chess where each party might try to guess what its rivals plan to do to seek minority community support. However, this may not happen. It is clear from Table 2 that many minority community candidates of the UNP were placed towards the bottom end of the lists, and these lists were prepared presumably on the assumption that the SLFP and the old left would contest the elections. Thus, there is no *a priori* reason to believe that the rivals of the UNP would have behaved significantly differently in this matter.

22 Although the Estate Tamils account for relatively high proportions of the populations in some Kandyan districts, they are not proportionately strong on the voters lists of these districts because many of them are stateless.

**TABLE 2**  
**District Council Elections 1981: UNP Minority**  
**Community Candidates: Elected Position on the List**

District	Total Seats	Seats won by UNP	Ceylon Tamils	Estate Tamils	Mnors
<b>Contested</b>					
Colombo	16	12	10 <sup>a</sup>	3	2, 9 <sup>b</sup>
Gampaha	12	9	-	-	6 <sup>c</sup>
Kalutara	8	6	-	-	2
Matale	3	3	-	-	3 <sup>d</sup>
Galle	9	7	-	-	6 <sup>e</sup>
Hambantota	3	2	-	-	-
Puttalam	4	2	-	-	-
Anuradhapura	6	5	-	-	5 <sup>f</sup>
Polonnaruwa	2	2	-	-	-
Badulla	8	6	-	2 <sup>g</sup>	-
<b>Uncontested</b>					
Kandy	13	13	-	4	1
Nuwara Eliya	5	5	-	2	-
Matara	6	6	-	-	6 <sup>h</sup>
Kurunegala	13	11	-	-	-
Moneragala	2	2	-	-	-
Ratnapura	7	7	-	6 <sup>i</sup>	-
Kegalle	8	8	-	-	3

Source: The Sun of 28.04.1981

Finally, the DC elections illustrated the difficulties that political parties are bound to face when trying to negotiate an electoral alliance to contest under the new district-based PR system.<sup>23</sup> Other considerations aside had the SLFP conceded one district or more to the LSSP in the DC election it could have implied that a similar concession was in order in the parliamentary elections as well. The immediate repercussions of conceding a DC to a minor party may not be serious although the virtual abandonment of an entire district could have adverse long-term political repercussions for a party.<sup>24</sup> However, had the SLFP conceded one district or more to the LSSP in the DC

23. On the difficulty of making electoral agreements under PR in Sri Lanka, see the paper on 'Proportional Representation in Sri Lanka.'

24. In this context it is a moot point whether electoral pacts which led the left (LSSP and CP(M)) to concede whole areas in parliamentary elections to the SLFP has contributed to an erosion of their electoral strength due to the neglect of local party organization and so forth. For example, in the Gampaha district the left polled over 20 per cent of the total poll in 1947, 1956 and March 1960. In July 1960 and 1970 they conceded the entire district to the SLFP and in 1965 the LSSP had just one candidate. When the TULF contested the district in 1977 they polled only 2.1 per cent of the total vote. See also Vijay Samaraweera 'Sri Lankan Marxists in Electoral Politics 1947-1978' in *Universal Franchise 1931-1981 The Sri Lankan Experience*, Ed. K. M. de Silva, Colombo, Government Press, 1981.

elections it could have implied that a similar concession was in order for parliamentary elections as well. Given the fact that under PR majorities in future parliaments are bound to be much smaller than in the past, this is a concession that a major party such as the SLFP will not be willing to grant lightly.

### Conclusions

The DC elections clearly demonstrated that the next parliamentary elections are wide open. The UNP has lost some ground since 1977. Of course it can afford to lose some ground and still win. In 1977 it secured the support of 48.6 per cent of the registered voters in the South. Assuming a poll of 88 per cent it can afford to lose on average almost 5 voters in every hundred and still hope to win in a straight contest. Indeed, if small left groups such as the JVP were to intervene and take away, say 5 per cent of the voters on the register from the main anti-UNP parties the task of winning will become that much easier for the UNP. However, the outcome of the DC elections does not permit the the UNP to be optimistic. In this biggest ever mid-term 'public opinion poll' conducted in Sri Lanka the relatively poor performance of the Government in the more populous districts in the South indicate that it will have to seriously reconsider the electoral impact of some of its policies between now and the next election. This is particularly true of its policy on wage goods prices and wages. The PR system has definitely tilted the electoral balance in favour of the more populous and urbanized western, south-western and southern seaboard and its adjacent hinterland where the UNP has traditionally done well electorally.<sup>25</sup> As such its leadership appears to be convinced that if the new PR system were to help any party electorally it will be none other than their own. Thus it will be ironical if the UNP were to fare relatively badly in these areas and relatively well in the Kaudyan plantation areas and in the dry zone where the SLFP has been traditionally strong. In other words through a system of PR which brings Sri Lanka's electoral democracy closer to the 'one man one vote one value' principle the UNP might win the battle but lose the war. The principal electoral lesson that the SLFP and the old left probably have learnt from the DC poll is the virtual indispensability of an electoral alliance if they were to entertain serious hopes of beating the UNP. As we argued it is a battle that they have to grasp. The support of a third of the electorate for the UNP may not appear to be very much. However, if it succeeds in adding, say, 5 to 7 percentage points to this—it is no mean task under the present conditions but that is the kind of gain which a major party could hope for in a well organized campaign—against a divided opposition it becomes an almost unbeatable poll in most districts in the South.

25. In the present Parliament the Western and Southern Provinces together with the Puttalam District control 38.7 per cent of the seats. In a new parliament if the elections were to be conducted under the 1979 register they will control 42.9 per cent of the seats.

TABLE 1A

## District Council Elections, 4th June 1981—Results

	Total registered voters	Total seats	UNP		JVP**			
			votes polled	seats	votes polled	seats		
Sri Lanka	4,931,887†	102	1,515,100	65	321,980	13		
DISTRICT								
Colombo	911,251	16	266,424	12*	78,912	4		
Gampaha	778,344	12	250,798	9*	77,104	3		
Kalutara	469,501	8	139,431	6*	22,683	0		
Matale	175,225	3	70,773	3*	6,701	0		
Galle	483,005	9	146,317	7*	44,142	2		
Hambantota	222,040	3	67,448	2*	28,275	1		
Jaffna	463,414	10	23,302	0	—	—		
Mannar	38,680	4	14,713	2	—	—		
Vavuniya	38,011	4	10,976	2	—	—		
Mullaitivu	31,802	4	8,451	2	—	—		
Batticaloa	157,765	3	34,664	1	—	—		
Amparai	185,286	4	91,247	3*	—	—		
Trincomalee	119,872	2	42,388	1	—	—		
Puttalam	243,581	4	75,387	2*	—	—		
Anuradhapura	245,950	6	111,344	5*	33,625	1		
Polonnaruwa	112,411	2	38,271	2*	—	—		
Badulla	255,749	8	123,166	6*	30,538	2		
	TULF		TC		SLFP		Independent I	
	votes polled	seats	votes polled	seats	votes polled	seats	votes polled	seats
Sri Lanka	468,560	20	36,497	0	9,951	0	168,866	4
DISTRICT								
Colombo	—	—	12,386	0	—	—	—	—
Gampaha	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kalutara	—	—	—	—	—	—	56,986††	2
Matale	—	—	—	—	9,951	0	11,870	0
Galle	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hambantota	—	—	—	—	—	—	3,363	0
Jaffna	263,369	10*	21,682	0	—	—	4,191*	0
Mannar	16,459	2*	1,511	0	—	—	—	—
Vavuniya	18,048	2*	268	0	—	—	—	—
Mullaitivu	13,815	2*	650	0	—	—	—	—
Batticaloa	74,302	2*	—	—	—	—	16,698*	0
Amparai	37,875	1	—	—	—	—	—	—
Trincomalee	44,692	1*	—	—	—	—	—	—
Puttalam	—	—	—	—	—	—	63,959††	2
Anuradhapura	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Polonnaruwa	—	—	—	—	—	—	11,799†	0
Badulla	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

(Continued)

(Continued)

	Independent II		Rejected votes	Total votes polled	Total valid votes polled
	votes polled	seats			
Sri Lanka ..	24,725	0	164,423	2,710,102	2,545,679
DISTRICT					
Colombo ..	—	—	54,815	412,537	357,722
Gampaha ..	—	—	39,433	367,335	327,902
Kalutara ..	—	—	15,705	234,805	219,100
Matale ..	—	—	2,961	102,256	93,295
Galle ..	—	—	15,332	205,791	190,459
Hambantota ..	21,270	0	1,392	121,748	120,356
Jaffna ..	3,455	0	4,338	320,337	315,999
Mannar ..	—	—	169	32,852	32,683
Vavuniya ..	—	—	527	29,819	29,292
Mullaitivu ..	—	—	178	23,094	22,916
Batticaloa ..	—	—	1,092	126,756	125,664
Amparai ..	—	—	3,655	132,777	129,122
Trincomalee ..	—	—	1,654	88,734	87,080
Puttalam ..	—	—	1,806	141,152	139,346
Anuradhapura ..	—	—	7,413	152,382	144,989
Polonnaruwa ..	—	—	1,256	51,335	50,070
Badulla ..	—	—	12,688	166,392	153,704

Source and Notes (Table 1A)

Source: Official results released by the Commissioner of Elections on 18th June 1981 and published in the *Sun* of Saturday 20th June, 1981.

Notes: UNP — United National Party  
JVP — Janatha Vimukti Peramuna  
TULF — Tamil United Liberation Front.  
SLFP — Sri Lanka Freedom Party.

\* Wins the Chairmanship of the District Council concerned.

\*\* The J.V.P. was not a party officially recognized by the Commissioner of Elections. Therefore it contested as Independent Group I in the districts of Colombo, Gampaha, Matale, Galle, Anuradhapura and Badulla and as Independent Group II in Kalutara.

† Electoral register of 1979. This figure is only for the districts that were polled. In 1979 the total number of registered voters in the country including the districts that were not polled was 7,573,214 (Source: The Department of Elections).

†† A leftwing list that contested with the backing of the local organization of the Lanka Sama Samaja Party (LSSP).

X A list that contested under the leadership of Chelliah Kumarasuric who was a member of the UF/SLFP cabinet in 1970/77.

‡ A list that contested under the leadership of W.I. Hugh Fernando who was elected to a seat in the Puttalam District on the SLFP ticket in March and July 1960 General Elections. In 1968 he was elected MP on the UNP ticket at a by-election in a constituency in the same district and was a member of the UNP cabinet from 1968—70.

‡ A list that contested under the leadership of K. A. L. Wijesinghe, the SLFP MP for Polonnaruwa between 1965—77.

TABLE 2A

## District Council Elections, 4th June 1981—Analysis of Results

	UNP					
	Turnout %		% of total registered voters		% of total poli	
	1977	1981	1977	1981	1977	1981
SRI LANKA						
(i) All Island ..	87.3	*	44.9††	*	51.4††	*
(ii) Districts polled in 1981 ..	87.1	55.0	42.9	30.7	49.3	55.9
(iii) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces ..	86.4	50.2	48.6	33.1	56.2	65.9
(iv) Northern & Eastern Provinces only ..	89.7	72.9	20.8	21.8	23.1	29.9
DISTRICT						
Colombo ..	79.3	45.3	48.2††	29.2	58.6††	64.6
Gampaha ..	88.2	47.2	48.0	32.2	54.4	68.3
Kalutara ..	88.1	50.0	47.8	29.7	54.2	59.4
Matale ..	89.0	58.4	55.9	40.4	62.9	69.2
Galle ..	86.5	42.6	46.8	30.3	54.1	71.1
Hambantota ..	87.5	54.8	48.7	30.4	55.6	55.4
Jaffna ..	81.5	69.1	2.1	5.0	2.6	7.3
Mannar ..	92.7	85.0	40.6	45.0	43.7	44.7
Vavuniya ..	82.6	78.4	33.0	28.0	40.0	36.9
Mullaitivu ..	79.7	72.6	—	26.6	—	36.8
(Vanni) + ..	(85.5)	(79.1)	(26.2)	(31.5)	(30.7)	(39.9)
Batticaloa ..	87.8	80.4	23.3	22.0	26.5	27.4
Amparai ..	88.9	71.7	52.5	49.2	44.5	68.8
Trincomalee ..	85.6	74.0	40.3	35.4	47.1	47.8
Puttalam ..	87.4	58.0	48.6	30.9	55.6	53.4
Anuradhapura ..	88.3	62.0	47.0	45.3	53.3	73.0
Polonnaruwa ..	85.0	45.6	49.1	34.0	57.8	74.7
Badulla ..	87.7	65.1	52.5	48.2	59.9	74.0

(Continued)

(Continued)

	SLFP				JVP	
	% of total registered voters		% of total poll		% of total registered voters	% of total poll
	1977	1981	1977	1981	1981	1981
SRI LANKA						
(i) All Island ..	26.3	*	30.1	*	—	—
(ii) Districts polled in 1981 ..	25.3	*	29.0	*	—	—
(iii) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces ..	28.7	*	33.2	*	9.1 <sup>x</sup>	18.3a <sup>x</sup>
(iv) Northern & Eastern Provinces only	11.9	*	13.2	*	—	—
DISTRICT						
Colombo ..	21.6	—	26.4	—	8.7	19.1
Gampaha ..	37.7	—	42.8	—	9.9	21.0
Kalutara ..	21.8	—	24.7	—	4.8	9.7
Matale ..	30.8	5.7	34.6	9.8	3.8	6.6
Galle ..	24.2	—	28.0	—	9.1	21.4
Hambantota ..	32.2	—	36.8	—	12.7	23.3
Jaffna ..	1.2	—	1.5	—	—	—
Mannar ..	1.6	—	1.7	—	—	—
Vavuniya ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Mullaitivu ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
(Vanni) + ..	(0.6)	(—)	(0.7)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Batticaloa ..	23.8	—	27.1	—	—	—
Amparai ..	30.3	—	25.7	—	—	—
Trincomalee ..	20.5	—	24.0	—	—	—
Puttalam ..	33.9	—	38.8	—	—	—
Anuradhapura ..	35.3	—	40.0	—	13.7	22.0
Polonnaruwa ..	33.2	—	39.1	—	—	—
Badulla ..	31.6	—	36.1	—	11.9	18.3

(Continued)

(Continued)

	<i>Independent I</i>		<i>Independent II</i>	
	<i>% of total registered voters</i>	<i>% of total poll</i>	<i>% of total registered voters</i>	<i>% of total poll</i>
	1981	1981	1981	1981
<b>SRI LANKA</b>				
(i) All Island ..	—	—	—	—
(ii) Districts polled in 1981 ..	—	—	—	—
(iii) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces ..	—	—	—	—
(iv) Northern & Eastern Provinces only ..	—	—	—	—
<b>DISTRICT</b>				
Colombo ..	—	—	—	—
Gampaha ..	—	—	—	—
Kalutara ..	12.1	24.3	—	—
Matale ..	6.8	11.6	—	—
Galle ..	—	—	—	—
Hambantota ..	1.5	2.8	9.6	17.5
Jaffna ..	0.9	1.3	0.7	1.1
Mannar ..	—	—	—	—
Vavuniya ..	—	—	—	—
Mullaitivu ..	—	—	—	—
(Vanni) + ..	(—)	(—)	(—)	(—)
Batticaloa ..	10.6	13.2	—	—
Amparai ..	—	—	—	—
Trincomalee ..	—	—	—	—
Puttalam ..	26.3	45.3	—	—
Anuradhapura ..	—	—	—	—
Polonnaruwa ..	10.5	23.0	—	—
Badulla ..	—	—	—	—

(Continued)

(Continued)

	TULF				TC	
	% of total registered voters		% of total poll		% of total registered voters	% of total poll
	1977	1981	1977	1981	1981	1981
SRI LANKA						
(i) All Island ..	*	*	*	*	*	*
(ii) Districts polled in 1981 ..	*	*	*	*	*	*
(iii) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces ..	*	*	*	*	*	*
(iv) Northern & Eastern Provinces only ..	44.8	45.2	50.0	62.1	2.3	3.2
DISTRICT						
Colombo ..	—	—	—	—	1.4	3.0
Gampaha ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Kalutara ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Matale ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Galle ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Hambantota ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jaffna ..	58.6	56.8	72.1	82.2	4.7	6.8
Manar ..	47.5	42.6	51.4	50.2	3.9	4.6
Vavuniya ..	48.4	47.5	59.0	60.7	0.7	1.0
Mullaitivu ..	41.7	43.4	52.6	59.7	2.0	3.0
(Vanni) + ..	(46.1)	(44.5)	(54.1)	(56.3)	(2.2)	(2.8)
Batticaloa ..	39.9	47.1	45.4	58.6	—	—
Amparai ..	25.6	20.5	21.9	28.5	—	—
Trincomalee ..	23.3	37.3	27.3	50.4	—	—
Puttalam ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Anuradhapura ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Polonnaruwa ..	—	—	—	—	—	—
Badulla ..	—	—	—	—	—	—

(Continued)

(Continued)

	Rejected votes		Total non-UNP votes <sup>(ii)</sup>			
	% of total registered voters	% of total poll	% of total registered voters		% of total poll	
	1981	1981	1977	1981	1977	1981
<b>SRI LANKA</b>						
(i) All Island ..	*	*	42.4	*	48.6	*
(ii) Districts polled in 1981 ..	3.3	6.1 <sup>†</sup>	44.2	24.3	50.7	44.1
(iii) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces ..	3.9	7.8	37.8	17.1	43.8	34.1
(iv) Northern & Eastern Provinces only ..	1.1	1.5	68.9	51.1	76.9	70.3
<b>DISTRICT</b>						
Colombo ..	6.0	13.3	31.1	16.1	41.4	35.4
Gampaha ..	5.1	10.7	40.2	15.0	45.6	31.7
Kalutara ..	3.3	6.7	40.3	20.2	45.8	40.6
Matale ..	1.7	2.9	33.1	18.0	37.1	30.8
Galle ..	3.2	7.5	39.7	12.3	45.9	28.9
Hambantota ..	0.6	1.1	38.8	24.4	44.4	44.6
Jaffna ..	0.9	1.4	79.4	64.1	97.4	92.7
Mannar ..	0.4	0.5	52.1	46.9	56.3	55.3
Vavuniya ..	1.3	1.8	49.6	49.5	60.0	63.1
Mullaitivu ..	0.6	0.8	79.7	46.0	100.0	63.2
(Vanni) ..	(0.8)	(1.1)	(59.3)	(47.6)	(69.3)	(40.1)
Batticaloa ..	0.7	0.9	64.5	58.4	73.5	72.6
Amparai ..	2.0	2.8	36.4	22.5	55.5	31.2
Trincomalee ..	1.4	1.9	45.3	38.7	52.9	52.2
Puttalam ..	0.7	1.3	38.8	27.0	44.4	46.6
Anuradhapura ..	3.0	4.9	41.3	16.7	46.7	27.0
Polonnaruwa ..	1.2	2.5	35.9	11.7	42.2	25.3
Badulla ..	5.0	7.6	35.2	16.9	40.1	26.0

*Sources and Notes (Table 2A)*

Sources: Table 1A and The Ceylon Daily News, *General Election 1977*, Colombo, Lake House, 1978.

Notes: \* Not calculated because they are analytically meaningless.

† Includes the Ceylon Workers Congress.

‡ In the 1977 General Election rejected votes totalled 1.0% of all the total poll.

+ In future General Elections Vanni will be electoral district and will consist of the Administrative Districts of Mannar, Vavuniya and Mullaitivu.

†† Including the rejected votes.

\* In the contested districts only.

Minority Representation in the 1977 Parliament and on the 1981 Development Councils\*

	Total seats				Ceylon Tamils				Estate Tamils			
	1977		1981		1977		1981		1977		1981	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Sri Lanka	168	11.2	156	11.3	19	11.3	28	17.9	1	0.6	5	3.2
(i) All Island	107	16.6	102	17.8	19	17.8	28	27.5	—	—	2	2.0
(ii) Districts polled in 1981	61	2.2	54	—	—	—	—	—	1	1.6	3	5.6
(iii) Districts not polled in 1981	142	3.2	125	—	—	—	1	0.8	1	0.7	5	4.0
(iv) All Island excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces	142	3.2	125	—	—	—	1	0.8	1	0.7	5	4.0
(v) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces	81	4.0	71	—	—	—	1	1.4	—	—	2	2.8
(vi) Northern Province	14	87.4	22	100.0	14	100.0	21	95.5	—	—	—	—
(vii) Eastern Province	12	42.3	9	41.7	5	41.7	6	66.7	—	—	—	—
DISTRICTS POLLED IN 1981												
Colombo	17	6.3	16	—	—	—	1	6.3	—	—	1	6.3
Gampaha†	13	n.a.	12	—	—	—	—	n.a.	—	—	—	—
Kalutara	9	1.1	8	—	—	—	—	5.3	—	—	—	—
Matale	4	3.5	3	—	—	—	—	14.9	—	—	—	—
Galle	10	0.5	9	—	—	—	—	2.1	—	—	—	—
Hambantota	4	0.5	3	—	—	—	—	0.1	—	—	—	—
Jaffna	11	94.9	10	100.0	11	100.0	10	100.0	—	—	—	—
Mannar	1	51.4	4	—	1	100.0	3	75.0	—	—	—	—
Vavuniya	1	61.3	4	—	1	100.0	4	100.0	—	—	—	—
Mullaitivu‡	1	n.a.	4	—	1	100.0	4	100.0	—	—	—	—
Batticaloa	4	69.1	3	—	3	75.0	3	100.0	—	—	—	—
Amparai	5	22.2	1	—	1	20.0	2	50.0	—	—	—	—
Trincomalee	3	35.0	1	—	1	33.3	1	50.0	—	—	—	—
Puttalam	5	6.8	4	—	—	—	—	1.6	—	—	—	—
Anuradhapura	7	2.0	6	—	—	—	—	0.5	—	—	—	—
Polonnaruwa	3	3.0	2	—	—	—	—	0.2	—	—	—	—
Badulla	9	3.2	8	—	—	—	—	34.0	—	—	1	12.5
UNCONTESTED IN 1981												
Kandy	14	4.3	13	—	—	—	—	24.1	—	—	1	7.7
Nuwara Eliya	6	4.1	5	—	—	—	—	52.3	1	16.7	1	20.0
Matara	7	3.5	6	—	—	—	—	14.9	—	—	—	—
Kurunegala	14	1.9	13	—	—	—	—	1.3	—	—	—	—
Moneragala	3	1.6	2	—	—	—	—	6.0	—	—	—	—
Ratnapura	8	1.4	7	—	—	—	—	17.1	—	—	1	14.3
Kegalle	9	1.7	8	—	—	—	—	9.4	—	—	—	—

(Continued)

	Population + 1977		1981		Population + 1977		1981	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
SRILANKA								
(i) All Island	6.5	12	7.1	14	9.0	32	19.0	47
(ii) Districts polled in 1981	7.8	10	9.3	11	10.8	29	27.1	41
(iii) Districts not polled in 1981	4.3	2	3.3	3	5.6	3	4.9	6
(iv) All Island excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces	4.9	6	4.2	11	8.8	7	4.9	17
(v) Districts polled in 1981 excluding Northern & Eastern Provinces	5.3	5	6.2	8	11.3	5	6.2	11
(vi) Northern Province	4.1	—	—	1	4.5	14	100.0	22
(vii) Eastern Province	34.5	5	41.7	2	22.2	10	83.3	8
DISTRICTS POLLED IN 1981								
Colombo	5.5	3	17.6	2	12.5	3	17.6	4
Gampaha†	n.a.	—	—	1	8.3	—	—	1
Kalutara	6.0	1	11.1	2	25.0	1	11.1	2
Matale	6.4	—	—	1	33.3	—	—	1
Galle	3.0	—	—	1	11.1	—	—	1
Hambantota	1.3	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Jaffna	1.4	—	—	—	—	11	100.0	10
Mannar	25.3	—	—	1	25.0	1	100.0	4
Vavuniya	6.6	—	—	—	—	1	100.0	4
Mullaitivu‡	n.a.	—	—	—	—	1	100.0	4
Batticaloa	23.7	1	25.0	—	—	4	100.0	3
Amparai	45.4	3	60.0	1	25.0	4	80.0	3
Trincmalee	31.9	1	33.3	1	50.0	2	66.7	2
Puttalam	9.8	1	20.0	—	—	1	20.0	—
Anuradhapura	6.6	—	—	1	16.7	—	—	1
Polonnaruwa	6.9	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Badulla	3.2	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
UNCONTESTED IN 1981								
Kandy	8.2	1	7.1	1	7.7	1	7.1	2
Nuwara Eliya	1.6	—	—	—	—	1	16.7	1
Matara	6.4	—	—	1	16.7	—	—	1
Kurunegala	4.5	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Moneragala	2.1	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Ratnapura	1.2	1	12.5	—	—	1	12.5	1
Kegalle	4.4	—	—	1	12.5	—	—	1

Sources and Notes (Table 3A)  
Sources : Same as in Table 1A and 2A.  
Notes : \* Only those members who were elected on 4th June 1981.  
+ 1971 Census.  
n.a. Not available.  
† At the 1971 Census Gampaha formed a part of Colombo district.  
‡ At the 1971 Census Mullaitivu formed a part of Vavuniya district.  
x Population percentage refers to Ceylon Moors only